DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING PAPER

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IMPROVING COORDINATION WITH THE ALLIES IN RESPONSE TO THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN

Issues

The Allies agreed that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan challenged the basic ground rules of East-West relations. Given differing national capabilities and vulnerabilities, the record of response has been a mixed one. Further, time, the war between Iran and Iraq, and developments in Poland have blurred the public focus on Afghanistan.

-- The Allied record on economic sanctions is a shaky one, with the U.S. far out in front of others (separate transition paper on sanctions prepared by EB).

-- The Allies have accelerated their defense efforts under the concept of a division of labor. In our view, however, Allied efforts continue to be inadequate. Moreover, there has been some questioning of the concept of a division of labor, by which the U.S. takes the lead in responsibilities for defense contingencies outside Europe--e.g., Southwest Asia (SWA)--while the Europeans undertake increased efforts to fill the resulting defense gap in Europe. Critics of the concept claim that it gives to the Europeans credit for too parochial and regional a role, and does not take account of their nonmilitary contributions to stability in SWA and elsewhere in the Third World.

-- Other aspects of the Allied response to Afghanistan--such as the disappointing record on the Olympic boycott, and meetings by Giscard and Schmidt with Brezhnev--further served to highlight the broad question of how the West responds to Soviet aggression, and the tendency of Europe to seek a softer stance with their Soviet neighbors and to preserve the European benefits of detente.

Time Constraints

Our Allies will look for an early indication of the new Administration's policies on economic sanctions.

The Allies will anticipate an early statement of the new Administration's interest in greater European defense efforts, and will be particularly attentive to how we state this interest--by reiterating the theme of a three percent increase in real defense spending (see separate paper) or by some other means.

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2. Another possibility is that pressures generated by the war and sanctions against Iran would lead to a partial military coup by relatively junior officers. Such officers might well recognize the value of keeping Khomeini (or other senior clergy) as a national symbol in order to avoid antagonizing the mass support for an Islamic revolution, as personified by the clerics. However, they would be inclined to get the mullahs to play a less active role in government. Conceivably some charismatic Qadhafi-type could emerge in this process and eventually establish a relatively strong dictatorial government.

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3. Another possible scenario is that Bani-Sadr and his followers could somehow achieve control despite vigorous opposition by the clerics. Working in Bani-Sadr's favor are: the enhanced popularity which he has derived from his role as Commander-in-Chief during the war, and growing anti-mullah sentiment. However, the massive emigration from Iran of large segments of the middle class deprives him of an internal constituency which might otherwise enable him to become stronger than the clerics. Still, a Bani-Sadr dominated regime cannot be ruled out, particularly in conjunction with some type of military coup.

4. If scenarios one, two or three do not materialize, it is possible that the present system will gradually break up in the face of economic and war pressures and degenerate into anarchy and chaos which might present the Tudeh and other leftist groups with an opportunity to seize power. While we believe this is unlikely in the near term, such a development could lead to Soviet intervention in Iran. At the same time political disintegration could encourage restless minority groups to seek autonomy.

5. Finally, there is the possibility, made considerably less likely by the war with Iraq, that some exile groups might be able to reestablish themselves in some part of Iran and eventually to consolidate their power. (See Transition Paper No. 2 for fuller discussion of the exile problem.)

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